

Stewart-Nye House
108 N. Minnesota St.
Carson City
Nevada

HABS NO. NEV-13-12 HABS
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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

11.

STEWART - NYE HOUSE

HABS No. NEV-13-12

Location: 108 North Minnesota Street, (house and grounds occupy the entire block bounded by Minnesota, King, Phillips, and Musser Streets, Carson City, Nevada)

Present Owner: Roman Catholic Church

Present Occupant: Priests assigned to St. Theresa's Roman Catholic Church

Present Use: Rectory of St. Theresa's Church

Statement of Significance: One of Carson City's earliest homes, the Stewart-Nye House is a substantial stone building. Its first noted occupant was William M. Stewart, first United States Senator from Nevada, who sold it to James W. Nye. Nye was the first Governor of Nevada Territory, and later became the State's second United States Senator.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION:

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: c. 1860. It is known that William M. Stewart moved to Carson City in 1860, and the first Territorial Directory (1862) has him (as well as Mr. Atchinson) residing at the NW corner of King and Minnesota. The deed of September 28, 1861, states that the Stewarts were then residing on the property.

2. Architect: none known.

3. Original and subsequent owners:

The Stewart-Nye House is built on Block 12 of Proctor and Green's Division of Carson City (Frank M. Proctor and B.F. Green were two of the four original purchasers in 1858 of the Eagle Ranch, upon which Carson City was platted). The following references to the title of this block are found in the Ormsby County, Nevada, Deed Books.

1861 Deed September 28, 1861, recorded in Book 1, page 28. (deed not recorded until February 14, 1862). J.H. Atchinson sold to William Stewart his one half interest

in the lot of land in Carson City bounded by Musser, Minnesota, King, and Phillips Streets (Block 12) for \$3,000. The deed states that the lot is that now occupied by the Stewarts. (The First Directory of Nevada Territory [1862] gives the address of both John Atchinson and William Stewart as NW corner of King and Minnesota, which is the address herein described).

- 1862 Deed August 2, 1862, recorded in Book 4, page 5. William N. Stewart and Anna E. Foote Stewart, his wife, sold to Mrs. Elsie B. Nye of New York City (the wife of Territorial Governor James W. Nye) "the lot of land (block 12) now occupied by them" (the Stewarts) for \$8,000.00.
- 1879 Deed September 26, 1879, recorded in Book 19, page 436. Charles Mason Nye of St. Louis and Mary Nye Waller of New York, son and daughter and sole heirs of James W. Nye and Elsie B. Nye deceased, sold all of Block 12 to Mrs. Louisa C. Shrives of Carson City for \$4,300.00.
- 1880 Deed January 14, 1880, recorded in Book 19, page 438. Mrs. Louisa C. Shrives sold all of Block 12 to Jacob Klein for \$4,000.00.
- 1896 Deed, October 29, 1896, recorded in Book 27, page 630. Jacob Klein deeded all of Block 12 to his daughter Clotilda Therese Klein for \$1.00 and in consideration of love and affection (sic.).
- 1903 Deed, July 8, 1903, recorded in Book 36, page 565. Clotilda T. Klein and Mrs. Marie Isabelle (Klein) Dupuis (sisters), sold all of Block 12 to George F. Talbot for \$10,500.00.
- 1917 Deed, September 28, 1917, recorded in Book 37, page 24. George F. Talbot sold all of Block 12 to Thomas Grace, Roman Catholic Bishop of Sacramento for \$6,000.
4. Original plans, construction, etc.: No plans are known to exist. The building is constructed of sandstone, most likely from the quarry opened by Abraham Curry, at what became the Nevada State Prison.
5. Alterations and additions:

The exterior has been altered only to a minor degree. The front door and surrounding trim are not original, though

set in the original framed opening. That portion of the facade covered by the front porch has had stucco applied, with simulated joints painted on. The bay window nearest the southwest corner also seems to be an addition. It does not show in the circa 1880 lithograph of the house reproduced in Thompson and West's "History of Nevada" (see item C, 1, "Old Views"), is smaller than the other two bays, and does not have the same trim. The rear wing is an addition, but a very early one. It is shown in an 1875 "birds-eye view" of Carson City and is also seen in the lithograph referred to above. The interior finish has been extensively changed, though the basic floor plan of the house seems undisturbed. The first floor trim is painted to resemble golden oak, and is "neo-colonial" in conception. It more than likely dates from the turn of the present century. The southwest bay window and front door trim accord with the interior work described herein, and are undoubtedly part of the same redecorating and remodelling scheme.

The house was purchased in 1903 by George F. Talbot, who came to Carson City from Elko, Nevada in that year to serve on the Nevada State Supreme Court. There is a series of photographs of the house in the Nevada Historical Society showing the interiors as they now are. Several show Judge Talbot also, and it may well be that he "updated" the interior of the house at that time.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Building:

William Morris Stewart (1827-1909), was one of the first two Senators to the United States Congress from Nevada. He was born on August 9, 1827 in Wayne County, New York. In 1835 the family moved to Trumbull County, Ohio. In 1848, Stewart entered Yale University, where he stayed a year and a half.

In January 1850, Stewart obtained passage from New York to Panama, crossed the isthmus, set sail again and arrived in San Francisco in April 1850. He immediately joined the rush to Nevada City, California, where he remained until 1862; amassing a sizeable estate in mining, selling water to the miners to aid in their operations, and operating a sawmill. In addition to these enterprises, Stewart found time to read law, was granted a license, and in 1854, at age 27, was appointed Attorney General of California. In 1855 he married Anna Elizabeth Foote, the daughter of one of his law partners Henry S. Foote, ex-governor and United States Senator from Mississippi.

The Stewarts moved from California to Nevada in 1859, where

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Stewart soon became one of the leading lawyers in the Territory, settling first in Genoa, then in Virginia City. In 1860, Stewart moved his family to Carson City from Virginia City, and settled in the house herein described.

Though Stewart and his family resided in Carson, he admitted that most of his practice was in Virginia City. One of the reasons he gave for living in Carson City was its good water supply, compared to the then erratic and unhealthy supply in Virginia City.

Stewart realized that Carson City, rather than Virginia City, would be the more logical choice for the capital of Nevada Territory. At the first Territorial election in August 1861, Stewart was chosen a member of the Territorial Council. He was elected as the member representing district No. 3, Empire City and vicinity, just outside Carson City. Due in great part to Stewart's activity and influence, the Territorial Legislature declared Carson City the capital. During the first session of the Territorial Legislature, Stewart introduced more bills than any other member, and all were adopted. In 1862, as mining litigation was taking most of his time, Stewart resigned from the Territorial Council.

In August, 1862, the Stewarts sold the Carson City house to the Nyes and in 1863 moved back to Virginia City, where they built on Stewart Street, which had been named for him and which is the highest street in the City. The frame home cost \$30,000, and was considered far more elegant than the one in Carson. Stewart is said to have given his wife \$40,000 to spend in San Francisco on furniture for it.

On October 31, 1864, Nevada became the 36th state of the Union. The first legislature convened on December 12 and elected Stewart as the first Senator on December 15. James W. Nye, the other Senator, was elected the next day. Stewart served two terms in the Senate from 1865-1876. It was during this time that his activities won for him the title "Father of the Mining Laws of the United States." He also, during this time, worked for enactment of the fifteenth amendment. Upon its passage in the Halls of Congress, Stewart telegraphed the news to Carson City, and the Nevada legislature became the first of the State legislatures to ratify it.

In 1875, Stewart resumed his private law practice in San Francisco. In 1885, however, he was back in Carson City, having bought a house at the corner of Robinson and Minnesota

Streets, four blocks from his former home. It was known, and was stated in the local press, that Stewart had come back to live in Nevada so he could once more run for the Senate. One of Stewarts most urgent reasons for running was to rectify the "Crime of '73" (the Mint Bill of 1873) by which the gold standard had been decreed, much to the detriment of Nevadians.

Stewart was elected in 1887, and in 1892, the old law relating to silver was repealed. In 1896, however, McKinley was elected President, and the pro-silver forces were defeated. Meanwhile Stewart had been elected for another term as Senator on the Silver Party Ticket, serving from 1893 to 1899.

In 1898, Stewart was again back in Carson City, this time renting a suite of rooms at the Ormsby House, to campaign for re-election, again running on the Silver Party ticket. He was elected yet again and served until 1905. Retiring from the Senate after 30 full years of service, and 78 years of age, Stewart again returned to his beloved Nevada, this time to Rhyolite, where he lived with his second wife and daughter until his death in 1908.

The Stewarts sold their house on August 22, 1862 to Mrs. Elsie B. Nye of New York City. Mrs. Nye was the wife of James W. Nye, of Madison County, New York, who had been commissioned Governor of Nevada Territory on March 22, 1861, by President Lincoln. In addition to his appointment as Governor, Nye was also commissioned Commander-in-Chief of the Militia and Superintendent of Indian Affairs. Prior to his appointment, Nye had been the Police Commissioner of New York City and had been campaign manager for William Seward. When Seward became Secretary of State, he recommended Nye's appointment to President Lincoln.

Nye arrived in Carson City on July 8, 1861, having come by way of the Isthmus of Panama. Three days after his arrival, Nye proclaimed the organization of the Territory completed and announced the Territorial officers. Nye's first official act was promptly followed by others, and in short order the machinery of the Territory was well organized and in full operation. A census was taken in July and election of members of the Territorial legislature was held on August 31, 1861. Nye issued a proclamation that the newly elected legislators would meet on October 1, 1861 at Carson City. From that time Carson City's bid to become the capital was practically sealed.

Much of Nye's term as Governor was taken up with issues involv-

ing the War Between the States. Nye, known as the "Gray Eagle" steered the course of Territorial government in a firm and steady manner throughout these years. In March 1864, President Lincoln issued the Enabling Act, by which the people of Nevada Territory were given the right to form a constitution and State government, prior to being admitted to the Union as a State. By September of that year, the Constitution had been adopted and approved by the citizens of Nevada, and on October 31, 1864, Nevada was admitted to the Union as the 36th State. Governor Nye carried on as Governor for the first five weeks of statehood. On November 8, 1864 an election was held, and Henry G. Blasdel became the first elected governor of the State.

In December 1864, a joint session of the new State Legislature was held to elect the two United States Senators. William Stewart was elected on December 15 as the first, and Nye was elected on the 16th, as the second. The two men drew lots to decide the length of terms; Stewart drew the four year term and Nye the two year one. Two years later, in November 1866, Nye was again elected U.S. Senator, to serve the full six year term from 1867 to 1873.

In 1872, Nye again ran for the Senate, but was defeated by J.P. Jones, known in the state as "The Commoner". After his defeat, Nye went to live with daughter in New York City. He became senile and was committed to an asylum in White Plains, New York, where he died on December 25, 1876. In his notebook was found a penciled message "come up tonight and swap jokes (signed) Lincoln."

The house on Minnesota Street was sold by Nye's children after his death, and was purchased by Jacob Klein, a well known Carson City figure who at one time was President of the Bullion and Exchange Bank, and owner of the Carson Brewery. Klein left the property to his daughters, who kept it until 1903, when it was purchased by George Frederick Talbot.

Talbot was born in Connecticut in 1859 and came to Nevada in 1869 with his parents. They settled in Elko. Talbot went back East to study law and on his return was admitted to the State Bar in 1881. He was elected District Attorney in 1884 and 1886. From 1895-1902, he was the Judge for State Judicial District No. 4, which included Elko, White Pine, and Lincoln Counties. In November 1902 he was elected a Judge of the State Supreme Court, and moved to Carson City the next year. Under the State Constitution, by virtue of being the senior Justice, he became Chief Justice in 1907. Talbot was also an

early President of the Nevada Historical Society. He sold this house in 1917, three years after the expiration of his term on the Supreme Court. Since that time, the house has served as the rectory for the Roman Catholic Church of St. Teresa of Avila which is located directly across King Street.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old Views: There is a lithograph of the house facing page 548 in Thompson and West's History of Nevada, cited below.

The Nevada Historical Society in Reno has a series of interior photographs taken circa 1903-1910 (showing the trim as it is now). These are in the "Ormsby County Homes" file. Several of these show Judge Talbot, which would seem to date them no earlier than 1903, when he purchased the property.

2. Bibliography:

- 1 - Baron, George Rothwell, [ed.]. Reminiscences of Senator William M. Stewart of Nevada. New York: the Neale Publishing House, 1908.
 - 2 - Davis, Samuel Post, [ed.]. The History of Nevada. Reno: The Elms Publishing Co., 1913.
 - 3 - Kelly, J. Wells, [compiler]. First Directory of Nevada Territory. San Francisco: Valentine and Co., 1862. (Talisman, 1962, reproduction of 1862 volume)
 - 4 - Koontz, John Political History of Nevada, (5th edition). Carson City: State Printing Office, 1965
 - 5 - Smith, Grant H., The History of the Comstock Lode, 1850-1920, in University of Nevada Bulletin, Vol. XXXVII No. 3, July 1, 1943.
 - 6 - Thompson, Thomas H. and West, Albert A. History of Nevada. Berkely: Howell-North, 1958 (facsimile reprint of 1881 edition).
 - 7 - Wren, Thomas, [ed.] A History of the State of Nevada, Its Resources and People. New York: Lewis Publishing Co., 1904.
3. Other Sources: Historical material received from the Reverend Harold F. Vieages, P.O. Box 177, Lovelock, Nevada,

89419. Father Vieages formerly lived in the house, and was one of the first to realize its importance in the history of Nevada.

Prepared by: S. Allen Chambers, Jr.
Architectural Historian
National Park Service
December, 1972

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

- A. General Statement: Architectural Merit and Interest: An early stone house which has been altered, with attractive interior features, having important historical associations.
1. Condition of fabric: Fairly good.
- B. Detailed description of exterior:
1. Overall dimensions: Original portion approx. 34 ft. x 42 ft., front porch 6 ft. deep; western addition 24 ft. long. One-and-a-half stories. Rectangular. (Bay count is not relevant in this case)
 2. Foundations: One course of sandstone.
 3. Walls: Squared sandstone rubble, randomly laid, brownish yellow in color. Joints have been pointed in modern times. Gable of east front is ashlar, painted light yellow. The lower part of the east front was stuccoed at some subsequent time and simulated stone joints were painted on.
 4. Structural system: Load-bearing exterior masonry walls, wood frame partitions, floors and roof.
 5. Porch: A shallow wooden porch of five unequal bays extends across the eastern front. Columns are square, paneled, with moulded capitals of a modified Doric type. The entablature is simple except for small brackets. There is a railing with turned balusters. The floor is of narrow matched boards. A low hip roof covers this porch.
 6. Chimneys: Two chimneys are visible on the north side of the original building, one near each end. There is one

chimney on the south wall of the western addition.

7. Openings - doorways and doors: The main entrance is located somewhat off center of the east front. It appears to be a later alteration set in the original opening. There are wide wooden mouldings in the masonry opening, with a frieze at the top. The single door has a large elliptical glazed panel at the "corners" of which are ornamental wooden panels, the whole forming a vertical rectangle.

Windows: There are three bay windows: two on the south wall and one on the north wall of the original building. The other windows have double-hung replacement sash, set into the masonry openings without exterior trim.

8. Roof: The original building has a shingled gable roof. The western addition has a flat roof with a slight pitch toward the west end; there is a low parapet on the north and south sides.

Cornice: The original building has a wooden boxed cornice with plain frieze, bed moulding and cymatium. There are no gutters on this portion.

Dormers: There are two gabled dormers on the south side and two on the north side.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: First floor - The original portion has two rooms along the south side and three along the north side, the one at the east front being smaller than the others. A longitudinal hall leads from the front entrance past the southeast room, to the southwest room. Just north of this hall, a narrow enclosed stair gives access to the rooms above.

The western addition contains a modern kitchen at the south, and accessory spaces.

Second Floor: Two rooms, one at each end, are finished off under the roof; they are connected by a small hall which contains the stair. Parts of the ceiling follow the slope of the roof. Some traces of early finish indicate that this space was probably finished at the time the house was built.

D. Interior Finish of note:

1. The second-floor rooms retain some small areas of old matched and beaded wall boards, and some narrow matched flooring. A simple rail in the hall adjoins the stair. Aside from this these rooms have been modernized.
2. Typical finish on the first floor appears to date from the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. Wooden trim is painted to imitate golden oak. Door and window architraves are moulded. Walls and ceilings are papered, the walls having a moulded wooden base. Solid doors have five horizontal panels; some have glazing above two panels.
3. Southeast room: This is a reception-parlor or living room. It is entered through a wide rectangular opening on the north wall. A large approximately semicircular bay window is opposite this opening, on the south wall. The west wall contains a fireplace with a high mantel shelf carried on fluted Ionic colonnettes. Between the fireplace opening and the entablature of the mantel shelf there is an oak frieze ornamented with delicate "Neo-Colonial" garlands below which is a glazed ceramic tile facing, blue-green in color. The fireplace opening is covered with an ornamental bronze cover. A cabinet adjoining the fireplace on the north has a leaded-glass door. There is a door adjoining the fireplace on the south. There is a picture moulding extending around the room, above which is a plain frieze; no cornice.
4. Entrance Hall: At one side of the entrance door there is a coat-rail with silver hooks. The entrance door has an elliptical beveled plate glass light.

E. Site and Surroundings:

This house occupies a spacious site at the northwest corner of Minnesota Street and King Street. The terrain is level. The entrance is from the east. The lot is surrounded by a hedge and is planted with trees. There is a small one-story shed at the west end of the lot.

It is thought that this setting has changed but little for a long time.

Prepared by: Harley J. McKee
Supervisory Architect
National Park Service
August 17, 1972
(date of visit)

PART III. Project Information

These records are part of the documentation made during the latter half of 1972 and the summer of 1973 in a project undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey in cooperation with the Nevada State Park System to record structures in Carson City and nearby areas.

The project was under the general supervision of John Poppeliers, Chief, Historic American Buildings Survey. Eric R. Cronkhite, Administrator, Nevada State Park System, and Mrs. Marshall Humphreys of the Nevada Landmarks Society assisted the HABS recorders in Nevada. Professor Harley J. McKee, Supervisory Architect, National Park Service, selected the subjects and provided architectural data for the sixteen Carson City structures which were recorded. Historical documentation for these buildings was prepared by S. Allen Chambers, Jr., Architectural Historian, Historic American Buildings Survey. Project Supervisor for the 1973 Nevada Summer Team, which produced the measured drawings, was Robert L. Hartwig of Harvard University. Student assistant architects were John T. M. Creery (University of Utah), Robert P. Mizell (University of Florida), and Jack W. Schafer (University of Cincinnati). Photographs were made by Aaron A. Gallup of Sacramento, California.